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SUBJECT: MACAU CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON ARTICLE 23, TRAFFICKING  
IN PERSONS

REF: HONG KONG 232

Classified By: Consul General Joe Donovan, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Last Minute Amendments to Article 23 Bill  
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¶1. (C) During his February 13 meeting with Macau Chief Executive (CE) Edmund Ho (reftel), the CG expressed hope that the final form of the Article 23 security bill would ensure protection of Macau residents' constitutional rights and freedoms. The CE said his government is considering incorporation of several amendments to the bill, with a Legislative Assembly (LA) vote to be held by February 24. He said the maximum prison term for several lesser offenses would be lowered from five to three years, and the GOM will not create a "special police force or intelligence department" to enforce the new law. Knowing that legal challenges to the bill will almost certainly be initiated after its enactment into law, the CE joked, "Hopefully it won't be tested in the courts!"

¶2. (C) Comment: The changes to the Article 23 Bill mentioned by CE Ho were not in the revised version sent by the GOM to the LA on February 3 (reftel), nor have they been reported in the press. Media have reported the LA committee vote on the bill has been delayed owing to members' wishing to review the committee report in depth; amendments may have emerged as part of that process. Press reports on February 18 indicated the LA would vote on the bill on February 25, rather than by the 24th. End comment.

CE Says GOM Serious About TIP  
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¶3. (C) The CG expressed support for Macau's anti-TIP efforts, and he noted the anti-TIP language contained in Macau's portion of China's February 9 submission of its National Report to the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review in Geneva. The report highlighted Macau's continued commitment to combatting TIP. The CE said the GOM "takes the trafficking problem seriously" and will ensure "the economic slowdown won't result in a worse situation here."  
DONOVAN